Under the Scheme . 100% assistance is provided to the states for the procurement of modem hand tools, fire resistant clothing, fire finders, fire tenders, construction of watch towers, creation of fire lines, training and demonstration, research and publicity to enable the states for prevention, detection and suppression of forest fires.

Foreign Companies in Cellular and Basic Telecommunication Services

339. SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV:
SHRI RAGHAVJI:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that several foreign companies are participating in the tenders issued by Government for the introduction of Cellular and basic telephone services in the country; and if so, the details thereof;

(b) which are the countries to which these companies bidding for telephone services belong; and

(c) whether Government would ensure that not only USA, Europe and Japan but some Asian countries also get a chance to participate in the development of modern telephone services in India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) Yes Sir. The Government has invited tenders for franchise of Cellular and Basic Telephone Services from registered Indian companies. In order to meet the eligibility conditions, the bidders have formed joint venture companies in collaboration with foreign companies. However, foreign equity in the bidder companies is limited to 49%.

(b) and (c) The countries to which the foreign companies bidding for telecom services belong are as follows:—

(I) For Basic Telephone Services

China, USA, Thailand, Malaysia, Netherland, Mauritius, Italy. Philliphihes, Canada, Sweden, Israel, Japan, Germany, Australia, etc.

(11) For Cellular Telephone Service

USA, Thailand, Singapore, Israel, Mauritius, Canada, U.K., Italy, Phillipines, Sweden, Norway, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Kuwait, Korea, Germany, France, Hongkong, Malaysia, Australia, China, Netherland, etc.

From the above it may be seen that foreign companies belonging to countries other than USA, Europe & Japan have also participated in tenders for Basic and Cellular Telephone Services.

Restructuring of the DOT

340. SHRI VIRENDRA KATARIA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the department of Telecommunications is being restructured into three wings-India Telecom, Telecom Commission and the Telecom Regulatory Authority;

(b) if so, whether these wings are being set up by an act of Parliament to ensure their independence or under any administrative order; and

(c) the terms and conditions of these wings and the criteria to be adopted for the selection of Chairman/Members of the each wing?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) an exercise to restructure DOT for the purpose of distancing policy making, regulation and operational functions has been undertaken. It has been decided to constitute Telecom Regulatory Authority for regulating telecom services. It will be set up after the Indian Telegraph (Amendment) Bill, 1995 which has been introduced in Lok Sabha on 2nd June, 1993 has been passed by the Parliament.

(b) It is not proposed to bring a legislation to separate policy making and operational functons. In so far as the proposed Regulatory Authority is concerned, it is proposed to set up this body through a Government Resolution after Indian Telegraph (Amendment) Bill, 199S is passed by the Parliament.

(c) No decision has been taken regarding the form which the restructuring exercise for distancing policy making and operational functions will take and as such it is not possible to spell out at this stage the terms and conditions as will as criteria for selection of Chairman/Members of the entities to be charged with so far as Telecom Regulatory Authority is concerned, it will be a non-statutory body to begin with but will have well defined functions and responsibilities. A person who is or has been Judge of the Supreme Court or who is or has been a chief Justice of a High Court will be eligible for appointment as Chairman of the Regulatory Authority. A person who has been Additional Secretary/Secretary to Government of India or holding an equivalent post in the Centra) or State Government for a period of at least three years will be eligible for appointment as a Member of the Regulatory Authority.

Modernisation of Telephone Exchanges in Karnataka

341. SHRI GUNDAPPA KORWAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether all the telephone exchanges in Karnataka have been modernised;

(b) if not, the number of modernised telephone exchanges alongwith the number of telephone exchanges with the old system;

(c) the time by which all the telephone exchanges are likely to be modernised;

(d) whether the work of modernisation of telephone exchanges in rural areas is being delayed; and

(e) if not, the time which the telephone exchanges in rural areas are likely to be modernised on priority basis?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Number of modernised telephone exchanges = 1912
Number of telephone exchanges with the old system = 21

(c) All life-expired old exchanges will be replaced during 1995-96 and other old exchanges will be replaced by modernised exchanges progressively after the expiry of prescribed life.

(d) No, Sir. All the exchanges in rural areas are modernised.

(e) Question does not arise in view of (d) above.

Defeat of an Aid motion by the US Congress

342. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:
SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAHBHAJIRAO SHINDE:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the defeat of motion seeking to deny US aid of $ 70 million for 1996 to India in the US Congress by 210 to 196 votes, as reported in the 'Patriot' of 30th June, 1995;

(b) whether Government have since taken or propose to take any further steps to augment and strengthen pro-Indian lobby in the US in particular and other countries in general and also to augment the Indian information system abroad in the light of the said voting on the US aid motion; and

(c) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Indian mission at